THE SECOND DAY.

18th February 1919.

The Assembly met at 12 noon on Tuesday, the 18th February 1919.

The Chief Secretary to Government announced that His Highness the Maha Raja has been pleased to approve of the election, by a majority of the Members of the Quilon Division, of Mr. C. Raman Tampi, B. A., B. L., High Court Vakil, Quilon, to the vacant seat in the Legislative Council and to sanction his appointment as a non-official member of the Legislative Council for a term of three years.

The consideration of the subjects, as per the list distributed to the Members on the previous day, was begun.

I. FINANCE.

1. Economic condition of the State and certain suggestions for its improvement.

Mr. S. V. E. A. Manickam Chettiyar (Member, Nominated) began with a fitting reference to the great European war and observed that it was a source of great pride and satisfaction to the people of Travancore that England, which entered into the war for upholding the cause of justice, righteousness and humanity and whom they in Travancore had helped to the utmost of their capacity, emerged triumphantly out of the deadly conflict. The Member then expressed the gratitude of the people to the Dewan who, by his constant endeavours to mitigate their sufferings caused by the abnormal rise in the prices of food-stuffs, had gained for himself the appellation of the "People's Dewan". He then submitted that, though 66 per cent of the population of the State were agriculturists, the total output of paddy in the State was insufficient for the needs of the people, and consequently large quantities of paddy and rice had to be annually imported from outside. It was, therefore, necessary to adopt all possible measures calculated to increase the production of paddy within the State. The first step to be taken was to collect statistics regarding the actual quantity of paddy required for consumption in the State, the quantity that was now produced in the country and the quantity that was being annually imported. The Department of Agriculture was, no doubt, energetic; but the ryots experienced difficulty in finding manure for cultivation. The number of manure depots should be largely increased. The question of imparting agricultural knowledge to the ryots did not at present receive sufficient attention. He suggested that demonstration farms and agricultural schools should be established in all important agricultural centres. Notwithstanding the expert opinion of the Forest Department, the Member considered that the question of throwing out swampy areas from the Reserved Forests for purposes of cultivation in the State deserved to be re-considered.

The Member next dealt with the manufacture of salt and the cultivation of tobacco. Large quantities of those articles were imported every year at enormous cost. He suggested that an officer be deputed specially to investigate the question of salt manufacture and to devise measures for the extension of the areas of the existing *Alloms* and factories and find out new sites suitable for salt culture. The manufacturers of the present factories should also be encouraged sufficiently with a view to produce more salt. Endeavours should also be made to start the cultivation of tobacco in suitable localities in the State.

There were ample facilities in the country for opening many industries such as paper, soap, dyes, matches, pencil, candles, wax, bone-powder, etc. The Member suggested that the Government should arrange for suitable industries being started

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

under the supervision of the Director of Industries in different parts of the State, so that people might follow his example. Industrial Banks should also be established and worked by the Government.

Finally, the Member represented that many superfluous appointments in the P. W. D., the Police and other Departments might be abolished and that the saving thereby effected might be utilised for carrying out his suggestions.

Dewan's reply.—Noted.

2. State Finance.

Mr. T. Kumara Pillai (Member, Kalkulam taluk) prefaced his remarks with submitting that, from the seventh session of the Assembly, the subject had been brought up and that that fact would show the importance of the subject matter of his representation. He then explained how both the receipts and disbursements had been increasing for the past 10 years. In view of the poor earning capacity of the people of Travancore and the annual income per head of the population in comparison with other countries, it was highly necessary that the income and expenditure should be so balanced as to leave a surplus to the credit of the State every year. He then reviewed the decline in the State surplus. According to the Member, the large increase in expenditure from the year 1083 was due to the departmental reorganizations carried out recently and to the resultant increase in salaries and establishments, notably in the Departments of Education and Public Works. The policy under which the opening of a Vernacular school had been made conditional on the people putting up the necessary buildings and maintaining them was a source of real hardship to the people which they could not bear. In regard to the P. W. D., the expenditure had to be curtailed on account of the present state of the finances. Still, the establishment charges had not been reduced but had, on the other hand, increased. Another recent feature of the public service was the increase in the number of officers on salaries out of proportion to their actual work. The manner in which the resources of the State were being husbanded at present was, no doubt, beneficial to the State. But it was necessary that the financial condition of the State should be improved. The only two ways of doing so were (1) increasing the revenue and (2) curtailing the expenditure.

As the ryots were already heavily taxed in respect of all sorts of produce from the land, there was no way of further tapping the sources of revenue from land. As Travancore is a purely agricultural country, the abundant raw materials should be utilized in the country, so as to enable the people to enjoy the finished products out of them. Ways and means to gain that object should be devised. The people had already had bitter experience of their dependence on other countries for their food. From an examination of the figures of export and import of paddy and rice for the past years from 1040 M. E., the Member submitted that, while Travancore was exporting paddy till 1044, it commenced to import its staple food from 1045. The import went on increasing year after year. The figures would clearly show that the necessity for importing the required quantity of food-crop for local consumption had been on the increase with the close of each year. It was high time that Government made an inquiry into the matter and took the needful remedial measures. If the import of paddy and rice was to be stopped and the State saved from its dependence on other countries for its food, a large area of fresh lands should be put under the plough. It was doubtful whether the required land was available for extensive cultivation. Failing this, intensive cultivation on a large scale was the only alternative, as suggested by the Director of Agriculture. There the problem was whether the people could carry it on. The Member was of opinion that they were unable, because they were not in a position to buy the scientific manures recommended by the Agricultural Department and at the same time provide themselves with water. A large number of irrigation tanks had become disused and silted up or had been sold in auction when the Kodayar Irrigation project came into actual operation. The result was that several paddy fields failed on account of scarcity of water which, besides bringing considerable hardship to several farmers, deprived Government of a good income in the shape of land tax. The Member recommended the appointment of an Agricultural Committee, to be composed of officials and non-officials, to suggest (1) the

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly